



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

# Recreation

## *Value to the Nation*

*Individuals • Communities • Economy • Environment*



*There's a Corps Lake Near You!*



# Value to Individuals

*Individuals • Communities • Economy • Environment*

When it's time for outdoor recreation, Americans head for the water. Our many lakes, rivers, and beaches offer everyone fun, fitness, rest, and relaxation. And, America's first choice for water-based recreation is the Corps of Engineers. One out of every ten Americans will visit a Corps lake this year.

*"Water is the number one recreation attraction in America... Swimming in lakes, streams and oceans is ranked among the top ten recreation activities; lakes and oceans remain the top vacation destination in America. Whether one uses aquatic resources to swim, boat, ski, fish, or simply take advantage of surrounding resources such as bicycle paths, walkways and hiking trails, water is a recreation resource that offers rest, relaxation, fun and fitness."*

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– **National Recreation and Park Association**



## Enjoyment for Everyone

Visitors to Corps lakes find many ways to enjoy themselves. In a recent year, the top-ten recreation activities were 1) rigorous walking, 2) driving for pleasure, 3) swimming, 4) picnicking, 5) fishing, 6) bicycling, 7) viewing wildlife, 8) camping, 9) visiting cultural sites, and 10) hunting. Visitors are also attracted to special events, including fishing tournaments, sailing regattas, arts and crafts festivals, and scouting activities. Individuals with special needs can also depend upon Corps facilities and programs for their outdoor recreation. Many trails, piers, and campsites are universally accessible, and assisted hunting and fishing events are offered.

*"The Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) relies heavily on Corps of Engineers recreation areas for our National Bass Trail tournaments, a B.A.S.S. sanctioned event. In addition, we have a vested interest in the accessibility of these areas. Paralyzed veterans, as well as others with disabilities, depend on the Corps for their outdoor recreation needs, such as camping and boating."*

– **Bruce Scott**  
**Director of Sports and Recreation**  
*Paralyzed Veterans of America*

## Enrichment for Everyone

Recreation enriches people's lives. Activities at Corps lakes help to strengthen family ties and friendships, and help children develop personal skills and social values. In addition to having fun together, visitors to Corps lakes are offered a host of ways to learn about the nature and culture of the area. Many participate in educational programs on topics like water recreation safety, fish and wildlife species, and cultural and historical resources. Children learn to appreciate nature, develop interpersonal skills, and build self-esteem.



# Value to Communities

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Cities and towns near Corps lakes enjoy a wealth of resources at their doorstep. Corps recreation areas provide outdoor playgrounds and classrooms for local groups and schools, and often become an integral part of the community. Like good neighbors everywhere, Corps lakes and nearby communities find a host of ways to get connected.

## Connecting Places

Americans nearing retirement often look for communities with ready access to scenic beauty and outdoor recreation. Cities and towns near Corps lakes, like Branson, MO and Hot Springs, AR, are often mentioned as prime places to retire. Modern communications and transportation make these places home to increasing numbers of working families as well. Some local communities at the doorstep of Corps lakes, like Gainesville, GA, include Corps recreation areas in their master planning. Gainesville is improving the quality of life of its residents by connecting trails, parks, and neighborhoods with nearby Lake Sidney Lanier.



*"In Gainesville and Hall County Georgia, we enjoy a wonderful quality of life that has been enhanced through a partnership with the Corps of Engineers. That partnership, and the resources of the local Corps office at Lake Sidney Lanier, has helped protect and enrich our wildlife habitats, scenic vistas, open space, and water supply. The partnership and cooperation led to the development of the 1996 Olympic Rowing, Canoe, and Kayak venue, that continues to provide a tremendous economic stimulus to our community."*

– J. Melvin Cooper, CLP  
Parks and Recreation Director  
City of Gainesville, Georgia



## Connecting People

Corps lakes and nearby communities are connected through people too. Park Rangers and other lake employees help local students and citizens learn about the natural and man-made resources they manage. Classes and groups come to the visitor centers and outdoor classrooms at our lakes, and Corps employees travel to nearby schools and community centers. The people connection is two-way. Corps lake neighbors provide volunteer and part-time help at recreation areas. Groups of youngsters and adults help with cleanup and beautification, and local teachers and others take summer jobs. These connections integrate Corps lakes and nearby communities.





## Triumphs of Yesterday

For over two centuries, the Corps has served the needs of the American people. Guided by the laws of Congress and the leadership of Presidents, the Corps has a rich legacy of managing cultural and natural resources for Americans to enjoy. In the early years, we built many of the nation's cultural icons which so many of us visit today: the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Library of Congress, and Potomac Tidal Basin. The Corps also built the roads, bridges, and aqueducts of Yellowstone, the nation's first national park. In the second half of the last century, our national leaders recognized the growing need for American outdoor recreation and provided the legislative authority which has evolved the Corps to its present-day status as the nation's leading provider of water-based recreation opportunities.

## Corps Recreation Today

The demand for recreation at Corps lakes today is large, diverse, and dynamic. Over the last 50 years, the Corps has built and maintained a vast array of facilities to serve the nation's need for water-based outdoor recreation. Today, one out of every ten Americans visits a Corps lake, for a total of 400 million visits a year. In addition to traditional activities like hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and boating, visitors are snorkeling, windsurfing, whitewater rafting, and mountain biking. A recent survey finds a majority of Americans feel that today's outdoor recreation is satisfying their needs for fun, fitness, rest, and relaxation. But, the importance of recreation to the health and happiness of all Americans requires that we continue to improve the variety and quality of Corps facilities to meet the demands of tomorrow.

### THE QUANTITY AND VARIETY OF CORPS RECREATION FACILITIES TODAY

- 456 lakes in 43 states - hosting 33% of all freshwater lake fishing
- 56,000 miles of shoreline
- 4,000 recreation areas - 80% within 50 miles of a large U.S. city
- 101,000 campsites
- 3,800 boat launch ramps - 200,000 fishing tournaments a year
- 5,000 miles of trails
- 12 million acres - hosting 20% of visits on 2% of federal lands



*"WATER IS A MAGNET FOR RECREATION. The Corps is the nation's second largest provider of water-based recreation. These opportunities benefit Americans physically, mentally, spiritually, and economically."*

*BUT, THERE IS A CLOUD ON THE HORIZON. The fast-changing recreational needs can't be done with old tools. It can only be done with new tools - new fee structures, new partnerships with the private and public sectors."*

– Derrick Crandall  
President,  
*American Recreation Coalition*

# Corps Re A Legacy

*Individuals • Communities*



*in America today, and is at the heart of Corps  
largest recreation host and its leading provider  
es are great contributors to our well-being:  
ally.*

*ZON...meeting the nation's fast-growing and  
well with today's aging and crowded facilities.  
authority, higher appropriations, and expanded  
s."*

# Recreation of Service

• Economy • Environment



## Challenges for Tomorrow

Water is the number one recreation attraction in America today, making federal lakes an irreplaceable public resource. The growing and changing demand for recreation at American lakes led Congress to create the [National Recreation Lakes Study Commission in 1996](#). The Commission found that increased use of federal lakes is desirable, but limited by 1) funds for updated facilities, 2) barriers to effective partnering, and 3) conflicting lake uses and goals. The Commission recognized the value of Corps lakes in meeting recreation needs, but also found problems with deteriorating roads and facilities. The Corps has a budget of just over \$200 million to operate and maintain its recreation areas – about 50 cents per visitor. User fees offset 20 percent of these costs.

A \$330 million program has been proposed to Congress to modernize recreation areas at Corps lakes. This program would update the design of facilities to meet the growing and changing demands of the American people. Campsites built for tent camping would be updated for motor homes, and boat ramps built for small runabouts would be updated for houseboats. Greater diversity is also planned. We would provide modern conveniences for some, and rustic, "get away from it all" facilities for others. Timely information for matching visitor needs and goals with available recreation facilities is another part of our modernization. Such a program would improve recreation at Corps lakes for everyone.

The importance of recreation to the well-being of all Americans is clear. People who participate in recreation activities are happier with their jobs, their families, and their lives overall. But participation depends in large part on the availability and proximity of facilities and physically attractive environments. The Corps is ready to continue its legacy of service to the nation and meet the challenges of tomorrow with all available resources.



# Value to the Economy

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Recreation promotes economic as well as personal and social well-being. It provides jobs and income for individuals and economic stability for American communities. Recreation has become big business. Americans spend 11% of their income on recreation, for a total of \$350 billion a year. Corps lakes play an important part in delivering the economic benefits of recreation.

## Prosperity for Communities

Recreation at Corps lakes spawns on-site businesses and supports others in local communities and across the nation. Resorts, marinas, outfitters, and grocery stores provide goods and services to visitors at Corps recreation areas. Nearby establishments provide our traveling visitors gas, food, and lodging while they visit. Use of Corps lakes also contributes to sales of recreation equipment, such as boats, campers, tents, and fishing gear. In an effort that promises to boost the economy around Rathbun Lake in Southern Iowa, the Corps is working with the local community to develop a unique tourist complex featuring a visitor center with a lighthouse theme.



*"I consider Rathbun Lake in Centerville, Iowa to be a very vital and integral part of our local economic development plan. The support of the Corps in our efforts to attract a destination park, develop the Rathbun Lighthouse project, and build an extensive system of recreational trails will greatly benefit the economy of Southern Iowa and Iowa as a whole."*

– Jack E. Guenther  
Market President  
Firstar Bank



## Livelihood for Individuals

These economic development efforts pay off in a big way. In an average year Corps visitors spend just over \$6 billion on trip expenses in local communities around Corps Lakes for things like gas, food, and lodging, resulting in over 250 thousand jobs. Beyond the local area, \$4 billion in visitor trip spending fuels about 100 thousand additional jobs. Every year purchases of durable goods like boats and campers by Corps visitors also add about \$5 billion to local and regional economies and about 150 thousand jobs. That's a total of \$15 billion in spending by visitors to Corps Lakes and 500 thousand jobs for American workers.



# Value to the Environment

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Recreation is enjoyed most in a healthy environment. Pleasant and abundant natural resources are the basis of a rewarding outdoor experience. The favorite activities of visitors to Corps lakes require clean water, land, and air, and plenty of fish, wildlife, and plants. The Corps manages the resources entrusted to it to preserve their value as environmental assets, and provide quality recreation for the American people. Educational programs help people understand and appreciate the environment, ensuring quality natural settings and recreation for present and future generations.

## Protecting the Environment

The Corps is the steward of 12 million acres of land and water resources, spread over 43 states. The ecological diversity of these resources is tremendous, and is home to many species that are threatened or endangered. Efforts to manage these diverse resources include many Corps programs and partnerships with federal, state, and private natural resource organizations. We work with state agencies who enforce hunting and fishing regulations and locate fish hatcheries and wildlife refuges on Corps managed property. We cooperate with [The Nature Conservancy](#) to designate "natural areas" that have unique ecological features and scenic beauty. And we coordinate with the [National Park Service](#) and state historic preservation offices to protect cultural and historic resources.

*"Today's anglers are highly mobile, well informed and heavily invested both financially and emotionally in their sport. They easily differentiate between healthy and disturbed ecosystems and the quality of recreation facilities."*

– Bruce Shupp  
National Conservation Director  
[B.A.S.S.](#)



## Appreciating the Environment

Americans visit Corps lakes 400 million times each year. One quarter of them come to fish. Others come to camp, hike, hunt, and view wildlife. Whatever they do, they experience and learn about nature. Over 3 million visitors attend our educational programs each year, many of which focus on understanding and appreciating the environment. We work with [Tread Lightly!](#), an organization which teaches visitors ways to enjoy the great outdoors while minimizing impacts. We participate in [National Public Lands Day](#), a popular event which encourages pride and ownership in public lands by improving trails, planting trees, and removing weeds and trash. Each year, over 70,000 of our neighbors volunteer their time and talent to help others enjoy and learn from their visit to a Corps lake.



*"Those who use our lakes and lands for recreation learn to care for these special places in many ways. The Corps is a true leader in providing opportunities for recreation and education on our public lands."*

– Kevin J. Coyle, President  
[National Environmental Education & Training Foundation](#)

# Sharing the Challenge

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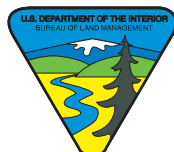
It's a big job to manage millions of acres of land and water and to meet the recreation demands of millions of visitors. The Corps works with many organizations to share this challenge. They help us by improving lake management and environmental stewardship, and by providing more recreation opportunities. Individuals can also play an important role by visiting Corps lakes, volunteering their time, and by becoming Corps employees. Learn how you can help by exploring the information sources below.



## Working Together

Organizations with very diverse interests share their time, talents and resources with the Corps to improve the overall service and value to the nation of our recreation facilities. Our partners include:

American Canoe Association  
American Recreation Coalition  
Bicentennial Council  
B.A.S.S.  
Boy Scouts of America  
Bureau of Land Management  
Fish & Wildlife Service  
Forest Service  
Girl Scouts of the USA  
Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council



National Environmental Education and Training Foundation  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
National Park Service  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
The Nature Conservancy  
Tread Lightly!  
Times Mirror Magazines  
Walt Disney Company  
Western States Tourism Policy Council  
Wilderness Inquiry

## Learning More

Many sources of information are available for you to learn more about Corps recreation, how to volunteer your services, and where to find that ideal vacation or retirement spot. A Corps recreation website has been established to provide you with a single doorway to information about recreation at Corps lakes.

**Corps Recreation Information and Maps:**  
[www.usace.army.mil/recreation](http://www.usace.army.mil/recreation)

**Corps Volunteer Hotline and Webpage:**  
**1-800-865-8337**  
[www.orn.usace.army.mil/volunteer](http://www.orn.usace.army.mil/volunteer)

**National Recreation Reservation Service:**  
**1-877-444-6777**  
[www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com)

